

**US House Natural Resources
National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands
Subcommittee Hearing – October 29th, 2019**

HR 4139 – Expanding Palo Alto Boundary to Include Fort Brown

PANEL 1 - REP VELA STATEMENT

Good Morning Chairwoman Haaland, Ranking Member Young.

Thank you for holding this hearing today on several pieces of legislation, including HR 4139, my bill to add the Fort Brown earthworks to the Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park.

In hopes of establishing the Rio Grande River as the southern border of the United States, General Zachary Taylor ordered the construction of Fort Texas in March 1846. On May 3, 1846, Mexican General Mariano Arista attacked Fort Texas leading to the Battle of Palo Alto, the Battle of Resaca de la Palma, and the Mexican retreat back across the Rio Grande.

While defending the fort, Major Jacob Brown was mortally wounded. To honor Major Brown, the fort became Fort Brown and the area became Brownsville.

Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park currently includes Palo Alto Battlefield and parts of Resaca de la Palma Battlefield, but adding this piece of Fort Brown is critical to the interpretation of the Mexican-American War, and changes to our international boundary. It is a record of our nation's border expansion extending to the Pacific Ocean.

The Fort Brown earthworks is the only standing architecture in the United States associated with the Mexican-American War.

Bringing the earthworks into the Palo Alto park, not only helps tell our nation's story, but protects this important symbol of the transformation of the country resulting from the 19th century Westward Expansion.

Chairwoman Haaland, Ranking Member Young – thank you again for holding this hearing. I urge you to move this legislation forward so we can protect an important piece of our history which will help us to tell the story of our nation long into the future.